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Year in Review 2020

NEWSMAKER of the YEAR

Mayor has tumultuous year amid coronavirus

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Without failure, the coronavirus pandemic brought government local to national into the limelight as people had to take their direction from orders made by the government, whether it was shutdowns or mask mandates.

It also made for a controversial election season. In Holyoke, no one made more headlines during a heavy political season than Mayor Alex Morse, from his decision to try and take on his own party to allegations of impropriety, all the way to his announcement not to seek re-election.

Morse has been mayor since 2011, winning election with the unseating of Elaine



Mayor Alex Morse

Pluta. He was the first openly gay mayor in the city and the youngest to be elected at age 22.

Morse made a controversial decision to enter the congressional race in 2020. He sought to unseat U.S. Rep. Richard Neal, D-Massachusetts for the First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Morse, also a Democrat, was set to challenge Neal in a September primary split his time working on the coronavirus pandemic and campaigning hard against Neal. His campaign raised a significant amount of money, which was heavily used for campaign commercials that aired frequently during the

See MAYOR page 11

STORY of the YEAR

COVID cripples city life

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

Without question, the coronavirus pandemic is the story of the year. It has dominated the existence of mankind for the overwhelming majority of 2020. It has cancelled or changed the traditions we hold dear, it has crippled businesses, and it has taken lives.

It has also changed daily lives and habits and the course of education.

In Holyoke, there have been nearly 2,800 total cases of the coronavirus with a population of more than 40,000 people in 2020. With the current surge, there is likely going to be more before the pandemic ends, though a vaccine has been rolling out since the middle of December.

Holyoke's public schools were shut down in late March, and remained shut down for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.



A staff member of the Holyoke Soldiers' Home testifies about the conditions during the pandemic.

File photo

Not long after the schools were initially shut down, a series of delays ensued for the playing of high school spring sports, and eventually, the season was fully cancelled.

Remote learning concluded in town in late June and students went home for the summer with very little activity available as people were

advised to stay home and only interact with their own households.

In the initial time period following the pandemic, social distance became a buzz words as people were advised to stay at least six feet away from people not in their immediate

See COVID, page 11

LOOKING BACK at 2020



The coronavirus pandemic took center stage throughout the country and the world. In Holyoke, residents had to adjust to life in a pandemic environment. Activities were limited, wearing masks and social distancing became a norm, but as you can see, residents in town attempted various parts of normalcy throughout the year. Above, Remote learning became the norm in Holyoke as students ceased attending school in early March, and have not returned yet. There is hope of a return to at least hybrid learning in early 2021. See more year in review photos on pages 6 and 12.

File photo

NEWCOMER of the YEAR

New receiver adjusts to educating in a pandemic

By Shelby Macri
smacri@turley.com

HOLYOKE – The new Receiver/ Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Alberto Vazquez Matos was thrust into the role of managing remote and online learning during his first year on the job. Though this year is his first as Superintendent and the class of 2021 will be his first graduating class, Vazquez Matos did attend the graduation for the class of 2020 and was able to send the class off to begin his year.

Vazquez Matos was born in Puerto Rico and moved to the Bronx in New York as a kid, so he has experience in urban cities. He was the deputy superintendent in Hartford before joining Holyoke's school team.

Vazquez Matos was drawn to Holyoke because of the history it



Dr. Alberto Vazquez Matos

holds, the diversity in students and residents, and the urban lifestyle of the city. He further explained that Hartford is a larger city, but Holyoke is smaller and allows him to make more connections with the community.

The city recently celebrated literacy within the district and Vazquez Matos read a bilingual book in celebration, he shared the video on the schools Facebook page and the response to it was highly positive.

"It was fantastic, people were interacting with the video and appreciated the bilingual book choice," Vazquez Matos said. "Other people started making videos with their kids of reading Spanish and bilingual books, and shared them on Facebook as well."

See RECEIVER, page 11

Seats remain open for ‘Wintersession’ classes

HOLYOKE – Seats remain open for January 2021 classes at Holyoke Community College.

HCC’s two-week “Wintersession” term begins Monday, Jan. 4, and runs until Friday, Jan. 15. Students can earn from one to four credits by taking a single Wintersession course that lasts from five to 10 days.

HCC is offering 24 courses during Wintersession 2021 in 18 different academic areas of study: Anthropology, Business Administration, Communication, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Economics, Engineering, Environmental Science, General Studies, Geography, Law, Management, Marketing, Mathematics, Nutrition, Social Science, Sociology, and Sustainability.

Because of ongoing concerns related to COVID-19, the majority of Wintersession classes at HCC are being offered remotely.

“Wintersession at HCC is a great way to earn course credits in a short amount of time – a whole semester’s worth in just 10 days,” said Mark Hudgik, HCC director of Admissions. “With our remote and fully online options, students can use HCC’s January classes to get ahead, get back on track, or lighten their load for spring, and they can continue to do it from the comfort and safety of their homes.”

For schedules and full course descriptions or to enroll for Wintersession 2021, please go to: www.hcc.edu/wintersession

Registration is also open for spring semester classes at HCC. The spring 2021 semester begins on Monday, Jan. 25, with two additional “flexible” spring start dates on Feb. 16 and March 29.

To register for spring start classes, please go to: hcc.edu/admission.

Library seeking donations

HOLYOKE – 2020 has been a challenging year to say the least! But it’s almost over. A pandemic can’t stop us from keeping kids and adults engaged in fun and educational pursuits. That will always be the goal for the library and we couldn’t do it without you! Our Grab and Go bags and other children’s programming was funded by donors like you.

Your gift today will fund these and other programs at the library:

Children’s Room:

\$150 can fund Virtual story times, Grab and Go activity bags, online learning tools such as

Miss Humblebees Academy and the Rocket Languages program.

History Room:

\$75 can help sponsor online lectures on local Holyoke history topics and expand access to genealogy websites such as Ancestry, Heritage Quest

Online and more.

Teen Room:

\$50 can help fund Teen Book Bundles and Mad Science craft kits for home use.

Your support is needed to keep these and many other programs going! Patrons still count on the library and our website to take advantage of information that Engages, Teaches, and Inspires.

Your donation—of any amount—is hugely important to our efforts. Every gift helps.

You may donate online at www.holyokelibrary.org/aboutdonate.asp or mail a check to 250 Chestnut St, Holyoke, MA 01040.

Please donate today. To help us with programming for the coming year, please get your tax-deductible donation in before Dec. 31.

Thank you for your continued support.

HG&E offers discounts

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Gas & Electric Commission has granted an extra 10 percent prompt payment discount on energy services billed during the December billing cycle. In addition, HG&E has a variety of resources that can assist customers who are facing financial hardship, including payment plans, energy efficiency programs, and connections to fuel assistance programs.

“HG&E is pleased to offer our customers an additional discount during the holidays, especially this year,” said HG&E Manager James Lavelle. “We understand many customers are facing difficult and uncertain times, we are here to help.”

For the average homeowner who heats with natural gas, the combined discounts (prompt payment and holiday discount) amount to savings of approximately \$58 on their bill. HG&E has implemented a holiday discount each year since 1992. This discount applies to commercial

and residential gas and electricity customers who are not already participating in an economic development discount program.

Many utility customers are facing uncertain times due to the pandemic; we are encouraging these customers to contact Valley Opportunity Council (VOC) to learn more about their Fuel Assistance Program that can assist eligible applicants in paying their fuel bills. . This year, VOC has made it easy to apply remotely. Call (413) 552-1548 or email fuelassistance@valleyopp.com.

In addition, HG&E’s customer service staff is available to discuss payment plans and energy efficiency opportunities, helping customers manage their monthly energy costs.

“All of us here at HG&E offer our best wishes for a warm and bright holiday season,” said Jim Lavelle.

For more information please contact, Kate Sullivan Craven at (413) 536-9333 or ksullivan@hged.com.

Holyoke Community class promises happier new year

HOLYOKE – Past year got you down? Need a brighter outlook for 2021? Holyoke Community College has a class for you.

HCC is partnering with Pam Victor, president and founder of Happier Valley Comedy, to offer “Establishing Resilience: Building Happiness,” a 2-½ hour Zoom workshop on Sat., Feb. 6, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Victor, a comedian and improv facilitator who prefers the title “head of happiness,” will lead participants on an experiential exploration of happiness and resilience building to enhance their joy and ease at work and home. She will share stress-relieving exercises and techniques to help people bring more well-being, laughter, gratitude, and play into their daily lives.

“Finding more joy in 2021 is a priority for me,” said Michele Cabral, HCC executive director of Business, Corporate and Professional Development. “As a participant in Pam’s 30-day ‘Happiness Experiment,’ I can tell you without doubt that this class is for everyone. In this single session, participants will get an introduction into the full program while Pam shares many useful tips and resources to help people get an uplifting start to the new year.”

According to its website, happiervalley.com, Happier Valley Comedy, based in Hadley, is Western Mass’s first and only comedy theater and training program:

The cost of the Feb. 6 class is \$99.

To register, please go to: hcc.edu/happiness.

Read The Sun online at www.sun.turley.com

Grants will provide 100,000 meals for people across Western Mass.

AGAWAM – Canary Blomstrom Insurance Agency of Agawam and Wheeler & Taylor Insurance of Great Barrington are providing major support to The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Two rounds of funding, one now and a second round in the spring, will pay for about 100,000 meals for hungry residents of Western Massachusetts.

The Food Bank provides food to 165 food pantries, shelters, and meal sites in Berkshire, Franklin, Hamden, and Hampshire counties.

“We’re so grateful to Wheeler & Taylor and Canary Blomstrom for their social investment in The Food Bank’s mission to feed our neighbors in need at this critical moment,” said Executive Director Andrew Morehouse. With this support, overall we’ll be able to provide 100,000 meals to households struggling to make ends meet and put healthy food on the table.”

“It couldn’t be a worse year, more heartbreaking year, for many folks. I’m glad to know the grants will support food programs in our local area as well as regionally,” said Sandy Brodeur, president of Canary Blomstrom.

Wheeler & Taylor and Canary Blomstrom are members of GoodWorks Financial Group, a network of com-



There are grants available to provide meals for residents throughout the region. Submitted photo

mon-ownership insurance, real estate and financial firms.

“Thanks to The Food Bank, thousands of people in the region are able to get enough to eat every day,” said Wheeler & Taylor Insurance president J. Scott Rote. “In this time of unprecedented need, our communities need unprecedented support, and we’re glad to do our part.”

With the pandemic, demand for food has grown exponentially. The

Food Bank is serving 109,500 people a month in 2020, up 16 percent from 2019. The organization has distributed 11.1 million pounds of food from March through October, a 30 percent increase. It estimates that about one in six residents in the region, including 40,000 children, or one in four, are food-insecure.

Based in Hatfield, The Food Bank (www.foodbankwma.org) provides food to hundreds of member food pan-

tries, shelters and meal sites in Western Massachusetts. The Food Bank does not distribute food directly to individuals (except through its Mobile Food Bank and Brown Bag Food for Elders programs). Instead, it acts as a regional clearinghouse to get nutritious food to local sites that help people in need of assistance.

Established in 1871, Wheeler & Taylor Insurance is a full-service independent agency and broker that serves customers with the highest level of excellence and professionalism. Headquartered in Great Barrington, it has offices throughout the Berkshires and operates nationally through locations in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, California and Nevada. Web: www.wheelertaylor.com.

Canary Blomstrom Insurance Agency offers auto and home insurance, business insurance, and individual and group life and health insurance and financial products. Its office is in the Feeding Hills section of Agawam. Web: <http://canaryblomstrom.com>.

With locations in multiple locations on the east and west coasts, GoodWorks Financial Group serves clients across the United States through its network of common-ownership companies. Web: <https://www.goodworksfinancial.com>.

Free COVID-19 testing at HCC extended until March 31

HOLYOKE — Free “Stop the Spread” COVID-19 testing at Holyoke Community College has been extended until March 31, 2021, according to the Holyoke Board of Health.

Drive-through testing at HCC is conducted six days a week in parking lot H near the western entrance to the Donahue Building on the college’s main campus, 303 Homestead Ave.

HCC has been serving as a “Stop the Spread” drive-through testing site since Aug. 26 to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Drivers are asked to enter the campus from Homestead Avenue, turn left onto the Campus Road and proceed to parking lot H. There will be signs and parking attendants on site to manage the flow of traffic.

The HCC testing site is open



The mobile COVID-19 testing site at HCC will continue operating through March 2021. Submitted photo

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m.; and Tuesday and Thursday from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Testing is free to all Massachusetts residents, and conducted on a first come, first serve basis. There are no appointments and no referral is necessary. Turnaround time for results is typically four days or fewer.

More information on all of the Stop the Spread test sites across the state can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread>

Please Note: Testing may sometimes be cancelled due to inclement weather. Be sure to visit the Holyoke Board of Health website for up-to-date information on cancellations: <https://www.holyoke.org/departments/board-of-health>.

Winter farmers’ market starts at Holyoke War Memorial

HOLYOKE – This winter, the newly relaunched Holyoke Winter Farmers’ Market will bring an array of locally-grown vegetables, meat, eggs, and more to the heart of the city. The market launched on Dec. 19, and will run from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Holyoke War Memorial at 310 Appleton Street on the

first and third Saturday of each month. SNAP/EBT and HIP are welcome, and Spanish translation is available. The Holyoke Winter Farmers’ Market is supported by the Holyoke Chamber of Commerce and the Holyoke Food and Equity Collective.

The market will feature five local

farms. Apex Orchards of Shelburne will be offering apples, vinegar, and honey, Atlas Farm from South Deerfield and Red Fire Farm from Granby and Montague will offer a wide variety of produce, including fresh greens like spinach, plus carrots, potatoes, winter squash, and a lot more. D & R Farm

from Hampden is bringing meat, eggs, vegetables, and their own baked goods and jams. Boze Family Farms from Springfield will be bringing salad mixes and a variety of microgreens and shoots. Almost all vendors are equipped to

See MARKET, page 9

Mall returning to reduced hours

HOLYOKE – Effective Jan. 2, 2021, Holyoke Mall will operate under new hours of operation based on valued feedback and input received from both tenants and guests:

Monday – Saturday: 11:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Sunday: 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Guests are reminded that restaurant, department store and entertainment venues may continue to offer extended hours

into the evening and are encouraged to call ahead to confirm a specific venue’s hours of operation or visit the center’s online directory here .

Guests are also reminded to wear a mask while inside or outside on Holyoke Mall property. For more information about Holyoke Mall/Pyramid Management Group safe shopping protocols, visit our Healthy Shopper Guidelines.

Flu vaccine deadline extended for students

HOLYOKE – The Massachusetts Department of Public Health had set the deadline of Dec. 31, 2020, for remote and in-person students to receive a flu vaccination unless they have obtained a

medical or religious exemption.

The deadline has been extended through Feb. 28, 2021. Learn more about the flu vaccine, view videos and resources.

Scholarship and Fellowship information meetings to be held Jan. 11 and Jan. 24

WESTFIELD – The Horace Smith Fund, now in its 121st year, has scholarship and fellowship money available for graduates of Hampden County public and private high schools. Two online information meetings are scheduled for Monday, Jan. 11 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, Jan. 24 at 2 p.m. for parents and students. To secure an invitation to attend, write info@HoraceSmithFund.org. Each session is about 40 minutes long and will include a question-and-answer period.

Scholarships awards of \$12,000 are distributed as \$3,000 annually and renewable each year until graduation. Fellowship awards of \$15,000 are distributed as \$5,000 annually and renewable for two additional years. Students must maintain at least a B average in college.

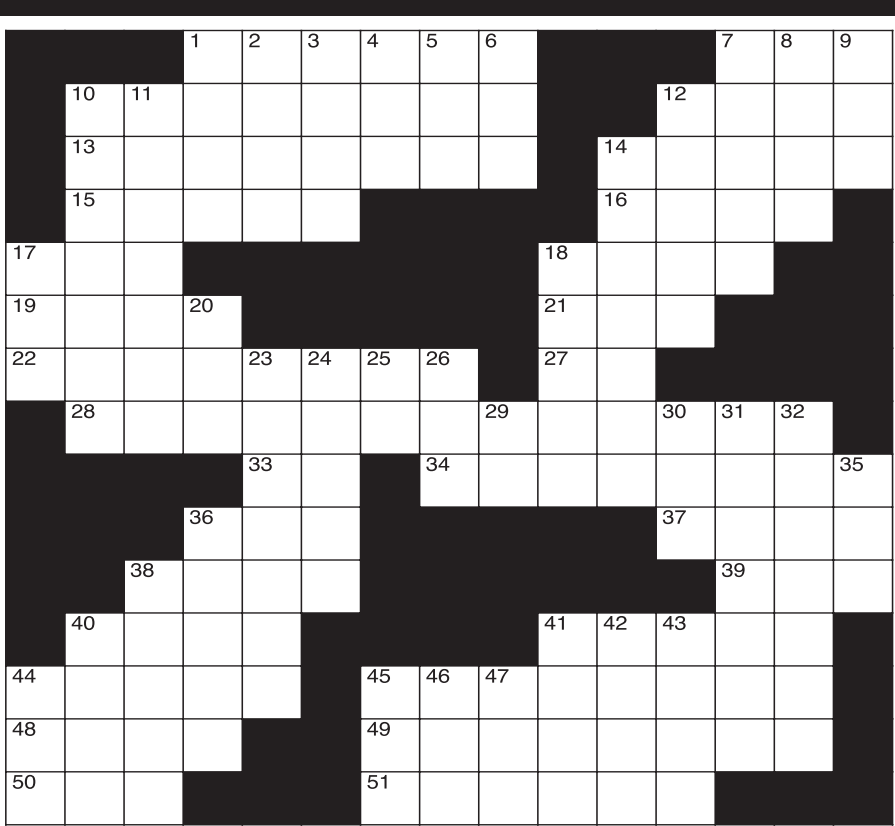
Recipients are selected on a variety of criteria, including financial need, cumulative graduating GPA, extra-curricular activities, recommendations, and college entrance exam scores, if applicable. Of great importance is a personal written account of why the student feels deserving of financial assistance. Additionally, fellowship applicants must also submit their GRE or degree-specific test scores, if applicable. All recipients

must be full-time students and residents of Hampden County.

Last year, \$297,000 was awarded to 24 individuals. Scholarships were given to 18 graduating seniors from Hampden County high schools. Three scholarships were also awarded to current college students to assist them in completing their undergraduate degrees. Three fellowships were given to college graduates pursuing graduate degrees, who had graduated from Hampden County high schools.

The Horace Smith Fund was established in 1899 by the successful and generous philanthropist named Horace Smith, co-founder of Smith & Wesson, located in Springfield. The scholarships and fellowships are named for Walter S. Barr, a West Springfield businessman, whose widow left the bulk of the family estate to The Horace Smith Fund in 1950.

Completed applications must be received either electronically or by mail to The Horace Smith Fund at 16 Union Avenue, Suite 2K, Westfield, MA 01085 no later than March 15, 2021. Applications are available online at www.HoraceSmithFund.org or by phoning the office at (413) 739-4222.



- CLUES ACROSS**

 - 1. Home of the Cowboys
 - 7. “Hawaii Five-O” actor McBride
 - 10. Most aged
 - 12. Fitted with a shoe
 - 13. Courteously
 - 14. They form over cuts
 - 15. Western Alaskan river
 - 16. Aggressive men
 - 17. Farm animal
 - 18. Young woman (French)
 - 19. Sixth month of Hebrew calendar
 - 21. Short cry
 - 22. State capital
 - 27. Rural delivery
 - 28. “Twilight Zone” creator
 - 33. Gigabyte
 - 34. Flammable
- hydrocarbon

 - 36. Supervises flying
 - 37. An actor who plays a principal role
 - 38. Furnace for pottery
 - 39. Fall back
 - 40. Afrikaans word for language
 - 41. Chinese city
 - 44. Fleshy
 - 45. Inventor
 - 48. Taxis
 - 49. A citizen of Spain
 - 50. Important age for aging workers (abbr.)
 - 51. Body part
- CLUES DOWN**

 - 1. Chinese mountain range
 - 2. Romanian city
 - 3. Fishermen cast it
- 4. Shelter from wind
 - 5. Sign language
 - 6. Pigpen
 - 7. Make sore
 - 8. Flat metal shelves
 - 9. Forms that say who you are
 - 10. Cigar lovers’ necessity
 - 11. Popular cooking ingredient
 - 12. Skin covering the head
 - 14. Unshakable
 - 17. Exclamation meaning “Finally!”
 - 18. One of the wise men’s gifts
 - 20. Take away from
 - 23. In accordance with the law
 - 24. Nicole Kidman’s husband
 - 25. NY Giants legend
 - 26. Utilize
 - 29. Beloved Hollywood alien
 - 30. Unwell
 - 31. More destitute
 - 32. Grinded together
 - 35. Sun up in New York
 - 36. Italian-made cars
 - 38. Most sacred site in Islam
 - 40. Rip apart
 - 41. Go in a specified direction
 - 42. Freshwater mussel genus
 - 43. “__ the Man” Musical
 - 44. One thousand cubic feet (abbr.)
 - 45. West coast time zone
 - 46. Mimic
 - 47. You can get one in summer

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 9

Poetry Corner

Happy New Year To All – 2021

By Thomas J. Kennedy

*We Must strive to
look and share goodness 2021
I know God looks down –
wants only genuine fun
This past year strangest ever of all
God loves everybody.
This year let us answer His call.*

*Too much anger, violence, stress, confusion,
Uncertainty – Looking for something
His Truth will come as we've been humbled
Our test positive or negative is over . . .*

*Too much sorrow, sadness, pain –
paid the price
Time now – lead childlike . . .
And to all, "Be nice."*

*Bring back honesty, moral integrity, childhood
Innocence and trust and respect –
Let's all set our ideals to real . . . Accept.*

*Now as far as too fast living tech.
If you were lost and had no cell phone
You might die.*

*Parents, friends and others
will cry perhaps you bye.*

*But living behind a mask
and half Pharisaical rules,
Young Teens . . . Lost their school,
social, special events, conversation teen.*

*Purpose meaning and
malaise education has set in.
We can do it – overcome gently within.*

*Cost so much social and mental mistakes
Can't go anywhere – About to break
Now back to Happy New Year
Shout it forever with a large smile.*

*God's peace, love and joy – More than awhile
Someone says Happy New Year . . .
You say Happy, Holy New Year and Christmas.*

*Merriest of Merry.
Let us begin – Starts with you
As God loves just you.*

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Guest Column

Gardening questions to end the year

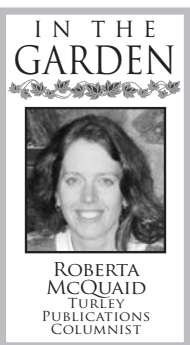
This question came to me from a reader who enjoyed the most recent gardening column that appeared in the Barre Gazette: "I loved what you had to say about your Babci's Christmas cactus. Mine just finished blooming. Could you please pass along some detailed advice so that I can have a repeat of this year's breathtaking blooms next Christmas?"

I am so happy you enjoyed last week's article. I'd be more than happy to give you some tips to make your Christmas cactus bloom abundantly next year! First, concentrate on plant care. Once the plant has finished blooming it will go into a period of rest, and will need very little water for nearly two months. When growth resumes in spring, water when the soil surface is dry to the touch and provide it with a dose of half-strength liquid fertilizer. Place in indirect light, an east or north facing window is best. During the summer months the plant can go outdoors as long as it is kept in filtered light. It will rest again in early fall, prior to bud set. You'll notice that it won't be as thirsty during this period, so water accordingly.

Then, consider the two environmental factors that are responsible for coaxing a Christmas cactus into bloom. The first is temperature and the second is light. If temperatures at night range between 55 and 60 degrees for a six-week period the plant will set buds regardless of day length. If temperatures run higher than that, 13 hours of uninterrupted darkness will bring about buds. Simply put the plant to bed each night from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. until buds form. If your plant sets buds and then drops them prior to full bloom it is likely due to overwatering or exposure. For this reason keep it away from drafty windows, doorways or radiators. This sounds like hard work, but is really quite simple. I'm sure you'll be delighted with breathtaking flowers next Christmas as well!

Carol has a problem with her kalanchoe. "Some of the leaves on my plants have spots of sticky sap on them. Do you know what is causing this and what I can do to prevent it?"

It's funny that you write about this particular problem with your kalanchoe! I recently saw some sap on my own plant. I had it in a mixed container of succulents over the summer and lo and behold, I brought it inside and now it has bugs. Look



at your plants closely, concentrating your attention directly above the portions covered in "sap." I almost guarantee you will find a flat, oblong-shaped, waxy-looking insect. Scales, as well as other sucking insects such as aphids or mealy bugs, excrete honeydew, a sweet concentration of plant sap. If left on the leaves long enough, sooty mold will form on the honey dew, coating them in "black dust."

Besides being unsightly, sooty mold diminishes the plant's ability to make food. To get rid of it, treat the insect problem first by spraying with an insecticidal soap. After a month or so, examine your plants closely for additional drops of honeydew; should you find some, repeat the entire process. As with insecticides of any kind, follow the directions on the container carefully.

In the greenhouse, growers target kalanchoe flowering to begin in early December. Colors include red, yellow, orange, salmon, pink and most shades in between. Individual flowers are diminutive, but in since they are held in clusters the plant as a whole is stunning. Another attractive feature of kalanchoe is its dark, shiny green leaves, perfect as a backdrop for all those brilliantly-colored flowers and pretty in its own right when the plant isn't in bloom.

The kalanchoe needs bright indoor light. Prevent overwatering by allowing it to dry out some in between waterings. A balanced fertilizer can be applied once a month during spring and summer. To initiate flowers in time for Christmas, put the plant in a place where it will receive complete darkness for 14 hours a day beginning in mid-September. Sticking to a schedule, say from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily, will make it easier to remember. Once the plants have finished blooming, remove spent flowers and trim back foliage to encourage dense growth. New plants are easily started from stem cuttings in the spring.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekenedy@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

the Sun
HOLYOKE

The Sun is published every Friday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977.

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A Quote

OF NOTE

*"Celebrate endings—
for they precede new beginnings."*

Jonathan Huie

Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor have a maximum of 350 words. We require writers to include their name, address and phone number in order for our office to authenticate authorship prior to publication. Addresses and phone numbers are not published.

Unsigned or anonymous letters will NOT be published.

We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions. Libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks or defamation of character are not allowed.

Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.

Please email (preferred) letters to thesun@turley.com. Mailed letters can be sent to *The Sun*, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

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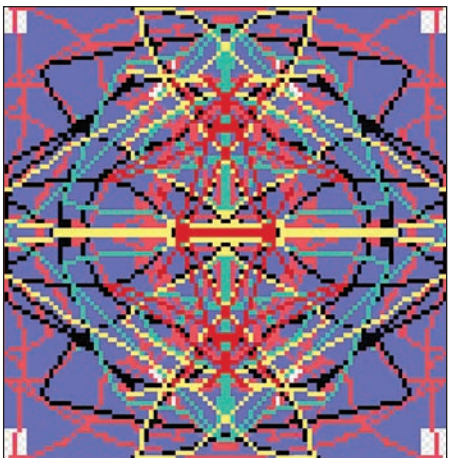
Looking Back at 2020



Above, much controversy was made over Holyoke's graduation after schools officials changed plans a couple of times before still holding a more tradition event with few spectators. Left, Digital art was utilized during remote learning at the end of the 2019-2020 school year as students learned to use online programs to create masterpieces.



Sports returned this fall with a modified season in October and early November. However, Holyoke's infection rate caused its fall season to be cut short on Oct. 21.



Playgrounds throughout the city had to be closed in order to quell the spread of coronavirus locally.



Voting looked different in 2020 with a major separation of voting booths and plenty of social distancing. Early voting was very popular this year.



A small microburst from a mid-May storm resulted in excessive damage to some buildings in the city.



Mayor Alex Morse announced recently he would not seek re-election to the mayor's office.

BUY DIRECT AND SAVE \$\$\$

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\$1⁴⁴ lb

USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS PORK BUTT STRIPS

\$1⁸⁸ lb

USDA INSP. FRESH PORK SPARE RIBS TWIN PAK.....

\$2⁴⁴ lb

SLICED IN OUR DELI

USDA INSP TURKEY BREAST

\$3⁸⁸ lb

TAIL GATE SPECIALS

USDA INSP STORE MADE ITALIAN MARINATED BONELESS CHICKEN BREASTS

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Rollback will 'not affect winter sports'

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION – In a statement released last week by the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, the rollback plan by Gov. Charlie Baker will not affect winter sports.

Baker's plan decreases capacities in most businesses and other venues, as well as the indoor gathering size being shrunk to just 10 people.

Because of COVID-19 surges that have occurred over the last two months, Baker has strengthened mask mandates, and scaled back business, and has established an attempt at a curfew by closing restaurants at 9:30, shutting down alcohol sales at the same time, and issuing a stay-at-home advisory from 10 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The advisory will likely affect game times for the winter season, but the sports that will be allowed for the winter season will still go on despite the restrictions. It is also possible some of the restrictions will be lifted as the season goes on.

Tara Bennett, director of communications for the MIAA, said the Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has been in touch with the MIAA regarding Baker's rollback of the "re-opening" of Massachusetts.

"The office (EEA) confirmed with the MIAA that Gov. Baker's announcement on Dec. 22 of rollbacks on certain sectors will not have an impact

on high school athletics."

As a result of that confirmation, no further restrictions will be added to the EEA's release of workplace safety and re-opening standards for businesses and other entities providing youth and adult amateur sports activities.

The EEA has been responsible for issuing the guidance utilized by the MIAA to conduct sports safely during the coronavirus pandemic, which is hopefully nearing its end.

The EEA is mandating mask-wearing in all sport environments where it is possible to wear masks. There will also be limitations to the numbers of players and personnel allowed at basketball courts and hockey rinks during the winter season. In order to reduce potential for crowds, there will be no winter tournaments. The pandemic cancelled the end of the winter state basketball tournament last March. There has not been an MIAA-sanctioned tournament game since that time, and it is unknown when there will be a tournament game, though the spring season is a definite possibility as a return to normalcy could be realized by June.

Winter sports in Western Massachusetts are supposed to begin for most schools following the New Year's holiday on Jan. 4. Games could begin on or around Jan. 14. Basketball, hockey, and swimming are supposed to take place with indoor track being moved to the bubble season and wrestling could potentially take place in the spring season.

Boys field hockey moves forward

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION – This spring, the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association Board of Directors will vote on a proposal to start a boys field hockey program.

The rule change has already been approved at the committee level in votes taken earlier this year, and will move on to consideration for adoption.

Field hockey has had its share of controversy over the course of many years as boys are currently allowed to play the sport with girls, the gender that typically dominates the sport.

It's believed boys give many teams a competitive advantage and it has shown in small spurts of improvement among various teams over the years.

Locally, Southwick, South Hadley, and Holyoke have been among teams that have benefited from having males play over the course of the recent time.

Southwick was a Western Massachusetts Division 1 champion in the mid-1990's with boys playing on the team. The team also enjoyed some success in the early 2000's with boys on the team.

South Hadley was one of few teams that knock off Longmeadow one year in the Western Mass. finals with a pair of boys playing on the



Boys playing field hockey has been a controversial topic over the years, with some believing it has given teams a decided advantage. *File photos*



Field hockey was played in a 7v7 format due to COVID-19 conditions. A 7v7 format has been proposed for a boys field hockey program.

team. Holyoke, while having a large number of talented female players, have also had boys on its teams during the

past decade.

The addition of boys field

See FIELD HOCKEY, page 8

Western Mass Relics able to get through 2020 season



The Western Mass. Relics, a softball league for senior, had one of the few successful campaigns in 2020 with no cases of coronavirus during its season. More than 170 players were able to be a part of the league in 2020.

Submitted photos

LUDLOW – The Western Mass Relics, which is a Senior Softball League, that's been in existence since 1994, was faced this Spring with the possibility of their season being canceled due to the Coronavirus. With the season questionable and the Relics always concerned

for player safety, the Relics worked closely with the Board of Health, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Town of Ludlow and The Fish and Game Club to be one of the few sports leagues in Western Mass to play a full schedule.

The Western Mass Relics

had 176 players agree to play and fortunately not one person came down with the Coronavirus. Among the steps taken to play safely were the following:

- Temperatures were taken upon arrival. The players had to record a temperature below 100

degrees.

- Players were required to wear masks in the field.

- Social distancing was observed when a team was batting. Players brought lawn chairs to accomplish this.

- There was no tagging out a player. All plays were considered a force play.

- Handshaking and fist pumps wasn't allowed.

- Bats were wiped down and handled by the barrel.

- * New balls were frequently changed.

- Spectators weren't allowed initially, but later in the season were allowed to watch the game from the parking lot.

The Western Mass Relics are looking forward to the 2021 season and welcome all new players. For further information go to their website: western-massrelics.org.



MIAA signs deal with University Orthopedics

FRANKLIN – The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) has signed a multi-year partnership with University Orthopedics to become an Official Orthopedics Provider of the MIAA. The partnership coincides with the Feb. 1 opening of University’s first Massachusetts location in Mansfield. The partnership will initially be focused on the southeastern part of

the state, with University Orthopedics supporting MIAA events taking place in Districts 7, 8 and 9. University will also serve as the Presenting Sponsor of all upcoming MIAA South Sectional Tournaments. “We are excited to partner with an organization like the MIAA that provides such an important role in the lives of thousands of student athletes

and their families. With our new location in Mansfield, we look forward to serving these communities and growing our partnership in the years to come,” said Edward Akelman, MD, President of University Orthopedics. “The health and safety of our Association’s 230,000 student-athletes participating at our 376 member schools is paramount to our mission,” said Bill

Gaine, Executive Director of the MIAA. “The opportunity to enhance that mantra with the expertise and support of University Orthopedics is a welcomed and valued gift.” Through this partnership, University will provide video content related to safe training methods, recovery and other orthopedic health measures. The new UOI Facility is located at 10 Reservoir Street in Mansfield.

Hall of Fame announces eligible candidates for the Class of 2021

Two Separate Enshrinement Ceremonies planned in 2021

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame today announced the list of eligible candidates for the Class of 2021, including first-time nominees Doug Collins, Michael Cooper, Howard Garfinkel, Lou Henson, Paul Pierce, Val Ackerman, Yolanda Griffith and Lauren Jackson.

Returning to the ballot are fan-fa-

vorite nominees Chauncey Billups, Chris Bosh, Richard Hamilton, Bob Huggins, Ben Wallace, Chris Webber, Jay Wright, Swin Cash and Becky Hammon among others. A first look at the list of eligible nominees was provided by The Jump on ESPN, hosted by Rachel Nichols, and Class of 2021 nominee Paul Pierce. A complete list of eligible candidates can be found attached. Following the Hall of Fame’s traditional timeline, Finalists from the North

American and Women’s committee for the Class of 2021 will be announced in the timeframe of NBA All-Star Weekend, which is scheduled for early March. The entire Class of 2021, including those selected by the direct elect committees, will be unveiled in the timeframe of the NCAA Final Four scheduled for early April. Event details are forthcoming, and the announcement timeline is subject to change. The Class of 2021 Enshrinement ceremony is scheduled to take place in

Springfield, Mass., in September 2021. As previously announced, the Class of 2020 Enshrinement ceremony has been rescheduled and relocated due to COVID-19 and is scheduled for May 13-15, 2021 at Mohegan Sun. Tickets for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Class of 2020 and 2021 Enshrinement ceremonies and various events surrounding the ceremonies will be on-sale at a later date. For the latest news and updates, follow @hoophall on Twitter and Instagram.

Pioneers to host Pelham clinic

LUDLOW – Western United Pioneers FC is excited to offer a soccer clinic in Pelham, MA for players in the Massachusetts North Region. The fall clinic provides off-season training and skill development by WUP FC coaches. There are two sessions available. sign up for one or both. It makes a great holiday gift for friends and family members. This program is offered to boys and girls born in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. The four-week program includes one practice per week for a total of \$65 per session (\$130 for 2 sessions). Sessions will consist of a max of 15 players per field

(COVID regulation for the players’ safety). SESSION 1: MONDAYS 1/11, 1/25, 2/1, & 2/8 • Boys and Girls Born 2013 and 2014: Session is at 5 p.m. • Boys and Girls Born 2010, 2011, and 2012: Session is at 6 p.m. SESSION 2: MONDAYS 2/22, 3/1, 3/8, & 3/15 • Boys and Girls Born 2013 and 2014: Session is at 5 p.m. • Boys and Girls Born 2010, 2011, and 2012: Session is at 6 p.m. The sessions will be held at Pelham Elementary School at 45 Amherst Road, Pelham, MA 01002.

Follow Turley Sports on Instagram

Turley Publications sports department has recently joined Instagram. You can find our account by searching “turleysports.” We will regularly feature samples of photos that you will see in our publications on a weekly basis. Please follow and share with

your friends and loved ones. We will be featuring photos from all 11 of our sports sections in the coming weeks, but as always, you can see all the photos that appear by subscribing to your local paper or picking up a copy in your community.

FIELD HOCKEY, from page 7

hockey has been proposed by Sherry Bryant, the MIAA Associate Executive Director and Field Hockey Committee Liaison. The field hockey committee fully supported the rule. According to Bryant, the rationale of the rule change is to “to allow the structure of this pathway for boys to be created and available for individual schools and co-op programs as they look to move forward. We recognize that in the absence of viable gender specific programs that all high school players may participate in the current high school field hockey programs, providing equity for all, while gender specific programs are grown.” According to her proposal, field hockey for boys would follow a 7 versus 7 format, similar to the format utilized for field hockey during the abbreviated

fall season with COVID-19 restrictions. Boys field hockey would be a sport proposed to take place during the fall season. It would have a similar 18-contest limit with no more than three games per week on the fall schedule. All sport committees approved of the proposal and sports medicine and sportsmanship committees of the MIAA have also greenlighted the idea, paving the way for a BOD approval. The rule would go into effect for the Fall 2021 season, but it could take a few years before teams would be developed. Rules would not need to be developed as the proposal stipulates boys field hockey would play under National Federation of High School rules, which Massachusetts has now adopted for most sports. One interesting caveat is that a proposal to bar boys from playing on girls teams was defeated. Girls normally play an 11 versus 11 format.

Better Business Bureau warns of COVID-19 vaccine scams

With United States and Canada approving a COVID-19 vaccine, government officials expect scams to emerge as distribution begins. Watch out for everything from phony treatments to phishing messages. Government officials have already been cracking down on phony COVID testing kits and treatments. Now, they are ramping up efforts to prevent the sale of fake vaccines. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is working with the drug companies developing the vaccines to stop the sale and distribution of phony versions. Also, the Federal Trade Commission issued warning letters to several companies claiming they had a product to cure or prevent the virus. Selling fake vaccines and other treat-

ments is likely only one of many ways scammers will try to cash in on the vaccine release. Watch out for phishing messages attempting to trick you into sharing your passwords and personal information. Con artists have already impersonated the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in phishing emails that claim to have news about the disease. BBB has also seen an increase in scams using robocalls to impersonate government officials. **How to Spot a Coronavirus Vaccine Con:** Research carefully: Scammers are very creative, so be skeptical of anything that seems too good or crazy to be true. Double check any information about the

vaccine with official news sources. And be aware that none of the vaccines can be currently purchased online or in stores. Check with your doctor: If you want a vaccine early, reach out to your healthcare provider about your options. If you don’t have a primary care physician, check out the official website of your local health department for more information. Ignore calls for immediate action. While you may want to be first in line for the vaccine, don’t let that sense of urgency cloud your judgment. Scammers try to get you to act before you think. Don’t fall for it. Think the link may be real? Double check the URL. Scammers often buy official-looking URLs to use in their cons. Be careful that the link is really what it

pretends to be. If the message alleges to come from the local government, make sure the URL ends in .gov (for the United States) or .ca (for Canada). When in doubt, perform a separate Internet search for the website. **For More Information** Read more about coronavirus scams on the Federal Trade Commission’s website. Learn more about the disease at the CDC’s FAQ page. Also, the FDA is updating this page about its progress in developing a treatment for coronavirus. BBB has identified many ways in which scammers are cashing in the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more about clinical trial scams, contract tracing cons, counterfeit face masks and government agency imposters.

Coalition hears Baystate Health update on virus

By Eileen Kennedy
Staff writer

WARE – The Quaboag Hills Community Coalition hosted Molly Gray, president and chief administrative officer for Baystate Health Eastern Region, and Megan W. Harvey, a Springfield College professor to provide perspectives on COVID-19 during a Zoom call Dec. 21.

Gray said Baystate’s seven-day positivity rate that week was 8.1%, which is about the highest the healthcare company has seen. “But it’s consistent with what’s happening across the state,” she said.

She said there were 158 of COVID-19 cases within Baystate’s hospitals as of Monday, Dec. 21.

The big news she had to share was 2,127 employees just got their first dose of Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine. “This could be a turning point,” Gray said. Since Pfizer and Moderna vaccines differ somewhat although each needs two doses several weeks apart, she emphasized it is important to stay with the same manufacturer for the second shot.

As of that morning, Baystate officials had just 260 vaccinations left to give out, and hopes are that Moderna’s COVID-19 vaccines will be on the way shortly; they’ve been ordered but they haven’t yet arrived, she said.

The vaccines are given in a central location so those receiving shots can be monitored for any side effects. A small number of those receiving the vaccine may have an anaphylactic reaction to it, so benadryl and EpiPens are kept on hand. Of the 2,500 people receiving a vaccine at Baystate, three people experienced an immediate reaction but felt fine after taking benadryl, she said.

Gray said Baystate system-wide has 250 employees who are out with COVID-19, or must quarantine them-

selves after being exposed to the coronavirus. “Every little bit helps or hurts us,” she said about the ups and downs of having staff out or having them back to work.

“The good news is what we’re not seeing is the flu,” Gray said. Healthcare officials across the country have worried here would be a “twin-demic” of the flu and COVID-19 cases, which could overwhelm hospitals.

She said it has been really taxing and really tough for frontline workers, and JAC Patrissi, facilitator of the meeting, asked her to convey the group’s gratitude for all their work.

Gray asked those attending to join her in role-modeling good behavior during the pandemic such as mask wearing, social distancing and refraining from large holiday gatherings.

Epidemiologist

Springfield College Professor of Health Sciences Megan Harvey said it is exciting because it looks like science will save the day with COVID-19 vaccines, which will help particularly front-line workers.

She said it is made of DNA from the coronavirus, which is then flipped to become RNA, but contains no actual virus material.



Molly Gray



Megan Harvey

The coronavirus is more infectious than Ebola but less infectious than measles, mumps or rubella, but it’s infectious enough to have its growth be exponential, she said.

Even with best estimates of COVID-19 deaths, the numbers indicate more people have died during the year than usual, and some of them are likely related to COVID issues.

As far as transmissions are concerned, big and small particles of the virus are spread, but it is also an airborne disease, because tiny particles can be suspended in the air for longer times and travel further making good ventilation important.

When asked about an evolved version of the virus recently found in England, Harvey said that’s what viruses

do, they involve, and often become more infectious. However, with the increase in its infectiousness, the virus usually doesn’t become deadly, she said, and expects this coronavirus to be no different.

Schools

Harvey said she expects vaccines will be offered in the spring and summer, but the vaccines are not for children under 18 as of yet. “I expect next fall to be a much more normal school year.” She also expects the rest of the school year will

remain in the hybrid model, with a couple of days in-person and the remainder through remote learning. She said it was probably unrealistic to expect schools could return to a full in-person schools this school year.

Although vaccines are becoming available, she said all safety measures must stay in place to reduce the spread, including mask wearing, six-foot distancing and having adequate ventilation. She said it is thought that there is not a lot of spreading through surfaces.

She said children are less likely to develop COVID-19, and if they do, they usually have a less severe case compared to adults. Children often have no symptoms or very mild symptoms.

When asked about herd immunity, Harvey said it means when a large enough percentage of the population has immunity against the virus.

She pointed to measles, which has about a 90% immunity rate these days, and to have immunity from COVID-19, 70 to 75% of the population would have to be immune for the cases to decrease.

Harvey also said it is clear that it has been harmful for students to not be in school. “It isn’t clear if that’s from the anxiety of living in the a pandemic,” she said, or being out of school without the fun of socialization. She also said students are experiencing more anxiety and depression, as are adults.

She said the only way to really stop the virus is by frequent testing of once or twice week, and then following up with contract tracing. It’s an expensive proposition to do that testing, which is why it is mostly private schools and colleges that can afford to carry it out.

She was optimistic that “science helped save the day.”

“I feel very hopeful that by February we’ll be coming down the other side,” Harvey said.

“I feel very hopeful that by February we’ll be coming down the other side,”

Megan Harvey

Public Notices

MARKET, from page 3

accept SNAP/EBT and HIP, which is a statewide program that offers shoppers who are using SNAP an instant rebate, up to a monthly cap, when they purchase fruits and vegetables directly from participating Massachusetts farms.

“Our goal is to make this market as accessible and welcoming as possible,” says Charlie Henzel, Market Manager. “It’s located in a central location in Holyoke and we really want to get the word out to people who are food insecure and make sure people know about HIP -- it enables people to stretch their SNAP dollars and get fresh produce as well as support local farmers.”

The Holyoke Winter Farmers’ Market has worked closely with the

Holyoke Board of Health to ensure that the market adheres to all state and federal COVID-19 guidelines, including a limit on the number of shoppers, limited entry and exit points, temperature checks, and mandatory masks.

Despite the precautions required in response to COVID-19, the Holyoke Winter Market promises to be a bustling community space. Crave Food Truck will be set up outside so shoppers can grab a meal along with their groceries. Says Henzel, “The Holyoke Farmers’ Market has run during the summer for over 40 years, so I’m really excited to see our community connect this winter over local food.”

Market updates and more information can be found at facebook.com/HolyokeFM.

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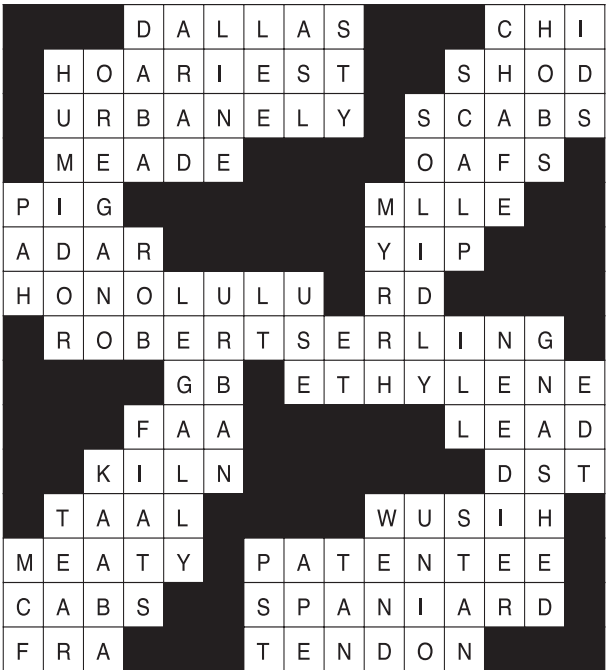
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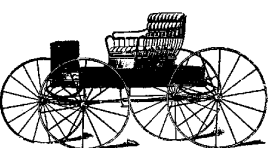
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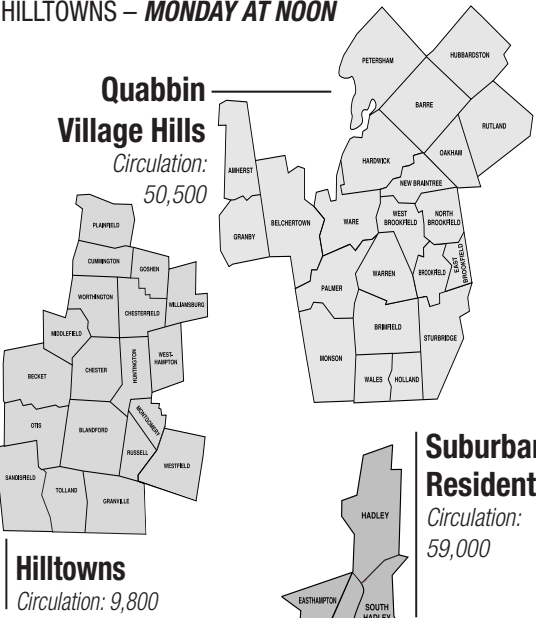
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RECEIVER, from page 1

It's the small connections like that that make Holyoke feel like home."

He expressed that the diversity of the students was something that drew him in.

Vazquez Matos' experience as deputy superintendent in Hartford gave him the opportunity to be prepared for Holyoke and allowed him to grow into this role. He expressed that he had great mentors who pushed him to be the best leader he could be, and now he feels that he can make a difference for schools. As he's currently creating a return to school plan that addresses specific areas of students learning.

He plans to expand access to Intervention Resource Classrooms, a comprehensive technique that helps students to develop coping skills by engagement. There would be an emphasis on English language arts and mathematics as they are important subjects and there is a need to help students better learn them.

"I'm asking everyone in our district about the districts strengths and weaknesses, for both before and during the pandemic so we can be better equipped to help students after COVID-19," Vazquez Matos said. "I want to help develop the skills and provide the information that students need to be successful."

The steps to help students become successful include focusing on literacy and reading, having students reading by third grade, and teacher retention. Vazquez Matos further explains that teachers need to make a working environment that students can learn and grow in, and that he knows Holyoke teachers can do it because teachers work hard here. The districts' teachers make connections with students and their families, and it's important to do so now more than ever.

Vazquez Matos is also looking at the middle school structure and making sure that schools are meeting the students' needs. He wants to expand language and special education programs based on the feedback he's received from the community. The need for a middle school design has come up at town hall meetings and Vazquez Matos feels that the district can create pathways to success for the middle school and high school students. "

I think we'll have to start the plan sooner rather later, though the initial planning will start for the next academic school year," Vazquez Matos said.

COVID, from page 1

household. Soon enough, Gov. Charlie Baker invoked a statewide mask mandate, forcing the wearing of face coverings when out in public places, such as grocery stores.

In the early part of the pandemic, Holyoke was the home of the one of the worst outbreaks in the country in a long-term care facility, which was the subject of much controversy. Nearly 80 people residing in the Holyoke Soldiers Home died from COVID-19 and the home's administrator, Bennett Walsh, was relieved of his duties. It also resulted in the resignation of the state's Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Francisco Urena. Over the course of 2020, an independent study faulted Walsh's administration for the outbreak. Walsh's termination by Baker would be overturned, but he would soon resign anyways and is currently facing criminal charges levied by Attorney General Maura Healey.

Grocery stores found themselves running out of basic necessities, including toilet paper, paper towels, and sanitizing products, including hand sanitizer and Clorox wipes. Hand soap was also in short supply. Grocery stores also found various supply chain issues, including pasta, chicken, and other meats due to the pandemic, which shutdown various farms and factories when outbreaks occurred.

In the summer, activity was very quiet, with most sports shut down and many of the city's playgrounds shut down in order to keep crowds down. Summer leagues were mostly cancelled, including baseball in the New England Collegiate Baseball League. The

Although one thing that may be addressed this academic year is switching to a hybrid model, as Vazquez Matos is seeing a large need for it. A survey was sent out to students and families asking about what model of learning they'd want, and students replied that they want to be back in school. Vazquez Matos has been working closely with the city's health department and meeting with them every week to ensure the safety of students to return to in-person learning. Vazquez Matos is planning a gradual hybrid system and would follow all necessary procedures, including having COVID-19 testing in the schools and having a two-week review of a current grade's progress before adding another grade to the building. In expectation of students returning the schools HVAC systems have been updated for in-person learning.

The first grades returning would be Pre-K to fourth grade as early learners are in need of in-person learning, from then on students would return by grade band with reviews between grades to make sure that it's safe and viable for more students to return to the school buildings. Vazquez Matos hopes to start sending students back to in-person learning after the break, he has been working on this plan for a bit and finalized plans throughout December to make sure schools are ready. He came to this conclusion because Holyoke is already not fully remote, as there are students working in shops currently and they act as a base for returning students to school.

While he admits that it was hard to be a new superintendent during a pandemic he understands that's it's hard to be any district leader or administration staff right now, and he's not in a rush to leave Holyoke as they are a welcoming community. He expressed that he's optimistic that this will pass, and that the current seniors will be able to do the things seniors do including the next steps to college applications and walking across the graduation stage.

"One thing I want to highlight is that a lot of great work was done before I arrived and I have an opportunity to build on that, and raise students voices," Vazquez Matos said. "At the end of the day the students make up the schools and their voices should be a part of the schools, they make our work valuable."

He said he's looking forward to seeing the celebration of students because of the commitment that they have displayed during this time of remote learning.

Valley Blue Sox, which play their games in Mackenzie Stadium, had no season due to concerns of traveling throughout New England. The NECBL season was cancelled, as well as the Tri-County Baseball League. There were baseball clinics held later in the summer, but they were limited in capacity and had to comply with strict guidelines.

School would not return for the fall in Holyoke as school officials opted to go with the fully remote learning model for all schools. Only those with special needs were allowed to learn in a hybrid format with some in-person interaction with teachers. The remainder have remained home with a hope at starting an hybrid model for all students early in 2021.

Fall sports would return, but student-athletes were subject to many rule changes and mask-wearing in order to be allowed back on the field. The season was also abbreviated and athletes were limited to playing against a small circle of schools, known as a geographic "bubble." The Western Mass. and state tournaments were also eliminated.

Later in the fall, a second surge, projected by many health experts, occurred, and Holyoke's case numbers ballooned. As the year ended, a vaccine has begun rolling out, but many Holyoke businesses are suffering as the governor rolled back capacity levels until the surge of cases goes down and more individuals are vaccinated from the virus.

Other impacts to the community have included shutdown of Holyoke City Hall to regular traffic, the closure of summer camp, and the lack of ability to regularly interact with local government due to remote and Zoom meetings held by the Holyoke City Council and Holyoke School Committee.

MAYOR, from page 1

final couple of months of his campaign.

Neal would accuse Neal of becoming a corrupt politician funded by influenced by special interest groups that helped to fund his campaigns. Neal, a 32-year veteran of the House, is the chair of the Ways and Means Committee. Morse accused Neal of not doing enough for his constituents when the first COVID-19 stimulus package was passed, known as the CARES Act. Morse said the act did not go far enough to help working people and businesses.

Morse also supported efforts by other Democrats in the House like the Green Neal Deal, which Neal opposes.

The campaign continued into August, when a report

was released early in the month accusing Morse of having inappropriate sexual relationships with students at the University of Massachusetts. Morse would admit to having relationships with students through a dating app while serving as an adjunct faculty member of UMass. He vehemently denied any wrongdoing, saying he was never involved with any students he was directly involved in teaching.

The letter revealing the accusations was made by the College Democrats of Massachusetts with guidance of the state level. Morse's campaign accused the College Democrats of intentionally attempting to sabotage his campaign. The College Democrats would end up apologizing for the timing of the letter.

No actual wrongdoing was ever found, but the damage was done by the allegations and Morse lost

handily to Neal in the Sept. 1 primary. Morse also was not retained as an adjunct professor by UMass-Amherst, and the school launched an investigation into his behavior.

Morse would disappear from headlines temporarily until he made an announcement recently saying after 10 years, he would not seek re-election to the mayor's office. Morse was re-elected successfully three times, including a four-year term in 2017 after city voters agreed to move the mayor's term from two to four years. At the time, Morse had indicated he intended serve 10 total years and would not seek re-election after the term had ended. Morse's final year in the mayor's office will be 2021. He has not announced if he intends to run for Congress again or seek another political office somewhere else.

Looking Back at 2020



Social distancing was in full effect at the Aug. 2 graduation of Holyoke High School.

File photo



Holyoke police and fire along with the FBI responded to a scene at 91 Pleasant Street on Sept. 15. Holyoke Police would arrest Gregory A. Bennett, the son of a former police Sgt. Gary Bennett. Bennett was charged with four counts of illegal possession of explosive devices. It appears, according to a spokesperson, that Bennett was attempting to make pipe bombs. Police found several of the bombs in the garage at the Pleasant Street house.



Despite the pandemic, the annual Fishing Derby was held this year by the American Legion.



The Class of 2020 had a parade on early June to celebrate graduation.



An oath ceremony was held at the Holyoke Mall for recruits heading into the military in December.



A drive-thru dinner was held at Kelly School earlier this month. The dinner was usually an in-person fundraiser but was converted to a drive-thru event by OneHolyoke.



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